EMERGENCY RESPONSE COUNCIL

NATIONWIDE PLAN FOR INTEROPERABLE COMMUNICATIONS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Interoperability begins with, and its greatest value is realized in the daily use by local users, yet works within a unified and actionable regional, tribal, State and Federal interoperability framework.

2. Interoperability is both a technical connection and effective shared understanding.

3. Ongoing support by elected and appointed officials at all levels of government, combined with predictable management, funding, operations and maintenance is essential for sustained interoperable communications.

4. The burden of Federal interoperability with local, regional, State, and tribal agencies is on the Federal government. The Federal government must coordinate its interoperability efforts and partner with users at all levels to ensure Federal agencies have a capability to interoperate with local, regional, State and tribal agencies.

   o The burden of State interoperability with local, regional, and tribal agencies is on the State government.

5. Mission critical voice is primary; data is secondary but very important.

6. Daily use of nationally recognized common resource names, language, and command structure creates trust & value for incident use.

7. Resilient interoperability requires people to flexibly adapt to the different levels along the Interoperability Continuum.

8. Grant funding authorizations and conditions from State and Federal government is prioritized to support cooperative efforts over strengthening stand alone systems. Agencies struggling with operability should join regional interoperability efforts.

9. Collaborate with neighboring agencies in the planning and acquisition of a communications system.

10. Public safety will identify opportunities at all levels of government to deploy or utilize shared systems.

11. Plan a migration path to a shared system, but seize unplanned opportunities in the short-term.

12. All levels of public safety, policymakers, industry and the public will be educated that interoperability saves lives, money, and property.

Nationwide Initiatives and Action Steps Needed to Improve Interoperability and

Initiative: Leadership & Coordination

1. Within 12 months, States will identify designated resource(s) and a single Point of Contact (such as a dedicated interoperability coordinator) to facilitate and coordinate Statewide interoperable communications efforts by sharing information with local and regional levels.

   - States formally recognize locally defined regions (intra-State and inter-State) and designate interoperability coordinators for those regions. Those coordinators work within their designated region on communications efforts.

   - The interoperability coordinator role at the State and regional level is established with consistent guidelines and the authority to act on decisions. These roles will have consistent guidelines for how to facilitate the efforts of their governance groups and coordinate their communication efforts in complementary ways, while still allowing for their community to address their unique specifications.

2. Within 12 months, there is one group at the Federal level with the authority and technical/operational expertise to facilitate cooperation of all Federal agencies, programs, and offices working to improve interoperability.

3. Within 18 months, grant money for interoperability is allowed to be used for training and/or staffing of positions focused on communications interoperability.

4. Within 6 months, there is one widely accessible national website for interoperability tools and best practices that includes a robust, interactive portal capability to use to share ideas and information.

5. Within 24 months, a cohesive software tool is in place that is able to inventory and analyze all dimensions of the public safety systems, beyond just the voice technology components. Capabilities for all lanes of the Continuum will be inventoried and updated through this software tool in a comprehensive way. The database from such a tool is secure.

   - This tool will allow State and local agencies to access their own system and other systems as authorized and needed.

Initiative: System Design & Interconnects

1. Within 12 months, the public safety community at the local, State, tribal, and Federal level have defined the technical and operational components of a public safety system of systems concept. Planners and builders of interoperable communications systems will know if they are part of a larger "system of systems."

   - Within 6 months the Federal government adopts the "system of systems" concept.

2. Within 18 months, the public safety community will have access to objective resources (other than vendors) to assess their user needs and help them develop their own requests for procurement.

3. Within 24 months, the public safety community has developed guidelines for inter-State (including tribal and territories) interoperability.

   - Within 6 months the Federal government adopts these guidelines to States for them to use as they define their operational need for interoperability in border areas and between State agencies. The States are responsible for working collaboratively to address the criteria for their inter-State connections. This respects the established work that has been done by locals.

4. Within 24 months, the Federal government equips Federal agencies with the capability to interoperate with what is being used by the local, tribal, State emergency response community. Federal agencies will collaborate with States and localities on how interoperability with the Federal level will be accomplished.

5. Within 12 months, a document describing the various migration paths from legacy systems to P25 is distributed nationwide.

Initiative: Standards & Certification

1. If the Federal Communications Commission adopts a plan that includes a nationwide public safety broadband network, within 6 months the National Public Safety Licensee that will be controlled by public safety will put in place a standard that meets public safety's requirements.

2. Within 6 months, funding is provided to increase State/local governments' participation in the standards development efforts (e.g., standards being developed by Telecommunications Industry Association, OASIS, IEEE).

3. Before 2008, there is a Project 25 (P25) Compliance Assessment Program (CAP) in full operation with conformance, performance, and interoperability test reports publicly available for both trunked and conventional equipment implementing the Common Air Interface (CAI).

   - Within 12 months of completion, agencies will leverage this program when procuring P25 equipment.

   - Within 18 months the CAP will have expanded to include conformance, performance, and interoperability tests for the P25 Inter Sub-System Interface (ISSI).

   - Within 24 months the program will become self supporting.

4. Within 12 months, a standards profile exists for Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) specific to public safety gateways and cross-band repeaters.

5. Within 6-12 months the websites with the Authorized Equipment List (AEL) and Standardized Equipment List (SEL) provide certification information for all communications equipment listed along with testing information (i.e. tested to what standards, where, by whom, etc).

   - Within 6 months, basic P25 CAP information is on the Responders Knowledge Base (RKB) website and is accessible to public safety.

   - Within 12 months, this is a robust P25 website that provides critical information and allows for effective decision making by those who access this information.

6. Within 24 months, the public safety community will be educated on SDO developed public safety communications standards that are completed and compliant equipment is available at that point in time.

Initiative: Standardization & Accreditation

1. Within 18 months, the practitioner developed and DHS approved National Incident Management System (NIMS) Communications Unit Leader (COML) curriculum has been used to train an appropriate number of COMLs for every State, territory, region and UASI defined urban area (as defined by local users).

   - This represents the first of several positions within the communications unit for which curriculum needs to be developed.

2. Within 12 months, the current Channel Naming nomenclature as developed by the National Public Safety Telecommunications Council shall be adopted as the nationwide interoperability standard.

3. Within 24 months, the standard for public safety radio communications shall be plain language and common terminology.

4. Within 24 months, the first multi-discipline, multi-agency class of a nationwide interoperability training program has graduated.

5. Within 12 months, all Federal interoperability technical assistance programs use a common methodology and the people who provide technical assistance are trained to do this work.

   - Skill sets are defined so localities know what type of people are coming to work on their systems (such as, technical, operations, policy).

   - Methodology is consistent yet flexible to meet the user need.

   - There is a clear methodology by which States/localities can request Federal technical assistance related to voice and data interoperability issues.

6. Within 36 months, public safety accreditation organizations partner with practitioners to certify communication and interoperability protocol, procedures, and training curriculum across the Nation.